

A
TESTIMONY
AND
WARNING
Of the Presbyterie of
E D I N B U R G H ,

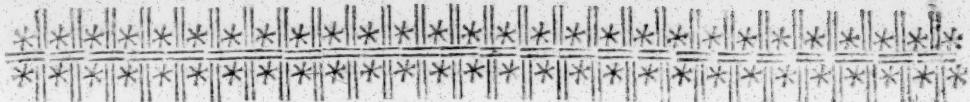
Against a late
P E T I T I O N ,
TENDING

(In the Scope and Designe thereof)
to the Overturning of the Ordi-
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in this Church.

O ctob. 5. A_{NNO} D_{OM.} 1659.

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TESTIMONY and VVARNING
 of the Presbyterie of E D I N B U R G H.

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 scope and design thereof) to the
 Overturning of the Ordinances and Truth of
 C H R I S T in His Church.

October 5. 1659.

IT cannot but sadly afflict all tender-hearted Christians, and lovers of the interests of Christ, that the Lord having for diverse years set the beauty of His Ornament in majesty among us, and afterward having set up His fire in *Zion*, and His furnace in *Jerusalem*, to take proof of our proficiency under His Ordinances, there should so much drosse and scum appear among us; that our outward chastisements should be attended with so many spiritual judgements, and that the licentiousnesse of the times hath not only loosed the reins to Atheism, irreligion and profanity in many, and opened the door to Seducers from without, to break-in upon this Church; but that even from among our selves some have arisen, speaking perverse things, who have spit in their Mothers face in the day of rebuke, and made defection from the Doctrine of Christ and His precious Ordinances, which she in mercy enjoyeth. As these things (in the holy and righteous dispensation of God) have bred us no small exercise and grief of heart in our station; So it cannot but augment our sorrow, when we find that distemper not only continuing to be a snare and trial to the Lord's people under our charge, but *hath* it is upon the growing hand. And that now some men are not

contented to make apostacy themselves, and to do what they can, by their example and activity in seduction, to ensnare others ; But they will also bend their outmost enfeavours to pull down the hedge about the Lord's Vineyard , and to overturn all settlement of Religion among us , that so liberty may be proclaimed, and encouragement held forth , to all who please to run wilde (under a pretence of *new light*) in all abominations of errours and delusions, until (if mercy prevent it not) the Lord's Plantation here be turned into an howling wildernesse, and so the way be prepared for Antichrist (who is not asleep in these times , and whose hand is, not without cause, suspected by the sober godly in these actings) to make a prey of us , Or the minds of people be so plagued with Atheism, by reason of their own and others reeling in the matters of God, that they will prove as capable of an impression of Heathenisme as of Christianity.

Of these pernicious practices, we have of late met with a sad instance, (which calls us forth to give our Testimony at this time) in that some, upon designes best known to themselves , have projected , and (as we have the charity to believe) ensnared others to joyn with them in a *Petition*, for making void and abolishing all Civil Sanctions establishing the Doctrine, Discipline and Government of this Church , (the fruits of the many prayers and sad sufferings of the Godl [sic] in his and former ages) that they may enjoy a vast Toleration and encouragement in imbracing these Errours, which they are pleased to set off under the specious names of *just Liberties* and *Giffel-priviledges*. This unnatural practice, proceeding from among our selves, and from some of these who once pretended to speak of a great blessednesse in building up what now they would destroy, and in enjoying what now they abominate ; though we believe it will not signifie much, upon the account of those who prosecute it, with discerning men who know them, and whom they grieve in this matter ; And in that respect we could very easily have passed it as a matter of little moment : Yet we could not but tremble to finde such a Spirit among us. And as we are called of God to stand in the gap, in our station, wherever any hazard to Truth and Religion appears in this Church : So we held our selves more neerly concerned in this businesse, seing it is asserted to be the Petition of some within our bounds and charge. And though we have hitherto contented our selves with bearing testimony against their way in our ordinary Ministry, if peradventure God might be pleased to reclaim them from the error of their way : Yet being informed of the same, and of the intent of these to have their petition

our selves to their consciences, or done our duty to these of our respective charges, without the superadding of this joyn Teſtimony.

If we ſhould infiſt to diſcant upon the Title and Subſcribers of that Petition, we miſt ſay many things, which neither would be pleaſant to them to hear, nor have we any delight to rake into. While they deſign themſelves *well affected persons*, if they mean in reference to piety and Religion, it would be but little pleaſing if we ſhould give the true chaſacters of ſundry of them who are known to us, and within our bounds, what ſome of them have been in all the turnings of theſe late times, and what they yet are; This will (we truſt) make our pains needless as to this purpoſe, that as it is known, how the body of the truely godly, Miſtiers and People, throughout the land, do abominate and mourn over their way, however they have diſſered in other things among themſelves; So we are conſiſt, wherever they are known, their piety (whatever it be) will not be perſuasive to comment this course in the eſteem of any diſcerning godly men. We wiſh they had given a greater proof of tendernesse and piety, than to affert in that very Title, that they are persons *in and about Edinburgh*. For, unleſſe they make moſt of the corners of this Land to be in and about it, this will be found a maniſt untruth; There being but a few of the Names we have ſeen at that Petition within all our bounds, and the moſt of them gathered in the Countrey, many miles from this place. That which we think moſt ſtrange in this conveighance, is, That diſvere persons, profeffedly oppofite to the way of the *Quakers*, whose principles and way have been already laid open to the world, in their true colours; yet do joyn with them in ſigning that Petition, which the hands of moſt of that Sect are gathered through the countrey. This as it gives us cauſe to believe the truth of what is crebly informed, of their gathering hands to ſeveral Copies of that Petition in ſeveral parts of the Countrey (ſome of the Petitioners little knowing with whom they joyned in it) which at laſt they put together in one paper: So it giveth us to understand what a liberty the deſigners of that Petition intend, even no other than what will comprehend theſe *Quakers* who joyn wiſh them, ſome of whom have published in print under their hands, not only vile reproaches againſt the Miniftry of this Church, but groſſe errors againſt the truth of God, as namely (to iſtance in ſome particulars) That the godly in this life are without fin; That the light whereby every man that cometh into the world is enlightened, is not the light of nature, but a perfect light ſufficient to ſave them who will follow it; yea, Christ himſelf, Their duty to pray; That men are able to fulfiill the law of God,

is a Doctrine of Devils to say, God commandeth men that which they are not able to performe : That the Scriptures are not the word of God, but the declaration of the word, and the words.

These and diverse other grosse errors about Election and Reprobation, Universal Redemption, &c. published by some of the Petitioners, do abundantly clear what a deluge of abominations they plead to be secured in. And albeit they have endeavoured to convey their designe more closely in their *Petition*; Yet their Agents have spoken their mind more fully in their *Proviso*: wherein they crave, that none dissenting from the Nationall Profession of the Doctrine and Church-discipline here established, be debarred or molested, but enjoy equal protection and encouragement in the exercise of their Church-profession, provided they profess faith in Jesus Christ, and do not make use of this liberty to colour any licentious practices, and it be not extended to Popery or Prelacy: and all this notwithstanding any lawes made to the contrary. This is indeed a Toleration as large as any that ever hath been pleaded-for by the wildest of Hereticks, and very far from that modesty that hath appeared in any judicious and sober men, though otherwise inclining to moderation in some differences. Hereby they would cut the sinewes of all coercive power or censure in matters of Religion, either by the Magistrate, or by the Church, and are not content to be secured against any Civil restraint to be laid on, unless also all Civil Sanctions establishing the Reformed Religion and exercise of Church-discipline be abrogated, or made void. They do not content themselves to plead for Toleration in matters of Church-constitution and Government, but in matters of Doctrine also, and that in such a latitude, that if they profess faith in Christ, they must go free; And, what Hereticks, how vile soever, will not profess so much, if they turn not Heathens, Turks, or Jews? All these other cautions, wherewith former concessions of liberty to dissenters are guarded (as, that they must profess faith in the holy Trinity, acknowledge the holy Scriptures to be the revealed Word of God, that they publish not horrid Blasphemies, that they revile not the Ministry or their Assemblies, nor disturb them in the worship of God, &c.) all these are here passed over in a general of professing Faith in Christ, and being free of licentious practices. And we might very justly enquire of them, upon their principles, why they would exclude Popery and Prelacy, more then the rest, and that not only considering how the very body of Popish Doctrine may consist with professing faith in Christ, aswell as other damnable errors; And learned men before us have demonstrated what a progresse Popish opinions have already made under the colour of new

lights (if not also by Popish Emissaries their insinuating themselves among several Sects for that effect) But we would gladly know what arguments they can bring from the Word of God for secluding those as corrupt Opinions and Religions, which will not militate aswell against other errors, even owned by some of them. This also may further discover the design of these Petitioners, and the iniquity of their desires, that they are not contented to plead for forbearance, or protection only, in their way, but that they, though never so erroneous, enjoy equal encouragement with the Sound and Orthodox : A thing condemned even by those who yet in many cases plead for a Toleration, and most unjust in it self, that those who profess the Truth, should not only extenl pity to spare deluded men, but encourage and maintain them in their pernicious wayes.

We cannot but be confident , that through the blessing of God , the very discovery of the iniquity of this course, will break the snare to all those who are not given up to wantonnesse of mind; for not receiving the Truth in love, and are not driving designs to root the true Reformed Religion out of this Land. And indeed, if men turn not Scepticks and void of all Religion , but do acknowledge there is truth and error in the world, and that men ought to be established in the prescnt Truth, and not to reel every day, 2 Pet. 1. 12. (for, how else could men either preach any thing as a truth, or how could they die with comfort , or suffer for any truth, as not knowing but a new day might produce new light ?) then it must certainly be an iniquity to let men run loose to do what is right in their own eyes, and to give no lesse encouragement to the grossest of Hereticks then to the faithful friends of Truth. If Heresie be a work of the flesh no lesse then Adultery, Murder,&c. Gal. 5. 19,20, 21. If erroneous Doctrines be damnable in themselves, 2 Pet. 2. 1. and no lesse prejudicial to the souls of others than a Gangrene in any member is to the body, 2 Tim. 2. 17, 18. And if Seducers by these Doctrines be no lesse dreadfull to the Church than grievous wolves are to flocks , Ag. 20,29. It must be great cruelty, not only to suffer, but to encourage such to run on to the r own perdition , and to seek the perdition of others, provided they hold fast a general profession of faith in Jesus Christ. If unity in Doctrine and Worship be a mean of establishing and multiplying the Church ; (as the practice of the Apostles makes clear , who finding the Disciples troubled, and their souls subverted with disputes and errors brought-in among them, Ag. 15. 24. do establish them and contribute to their increase; by their Decree suppressing the error, Ag. 16. 4, 5) And if, upon this account, a Ministry be appointed to bring the people

people of God to unity in the truth, and keep them in it, *Eph. 4.5,8,11.*
12,13,14. It must be an unquestionable cruelty to seek encouragement to set up that which cannot but retard the progresse of the Gospel, and frustrate the labours of the Ministry. In the dayes, wherein God hath promised that he will give his people not only one heart, but one way, *Jer. 32. 39.* And that not only the Lord, but His Name also, (or Ordinances in way of profession) shall be one, *Zech. 14. 9.* and wherein Christ hath prayed, that His people may be one, as a speciall mean to prove the truth of Christian Religion, *Job. 17. 20, 21, 22, 23.* They must be very sinfully employed, who in stead of mourning over, or seeking to repair the too many breaches that already are, or being sensible of the sad prejudices reounding thereby to the work of the Gospel, do leittir themselves so actively to multiply them, and to be encouraged in so doing. And if such a Toleration hath produced sad fruits, even in Churches where Religion is not settled, How much more abominable is it to seek it in this Church, which, in the great mercy of God, is settled in Doctrine, Worship, Discipline and Government, to the preservation whereof, both Nations are engaged by the Oath of God? This certainly is nothing else but to endeavour to pluck up the hedge planted by God about His Vineyard, and to open a door to the atheisticall and profane, under pretence of new lights, publickly to avow their contempt of all Ordinances and Truths of the Gospel, to the grief and afflicting of all the truly Godly.

It is neither necessary nor possible, in this brief Testimony, to descend particularly into this Controversie, or to condescend upon the manifold implications necessary for the right stating thereof, or to propound and vindicate the arguments confirming the truth. These are extant in the learned Writings of others before us, to be perused by all who desire satisfaction, and these Petitioners have saved us a labour, in propounding their desires in so large terms that they seclude nothing that bears the name of Christianity, except only the names of *Papery* and *Prelacy:* Nor will it suffice them that any should plead for a permission or forbearance to them unlesse they be encouraged and countenanced also. Therefore we shall only give a brief hint of our principles and grounds in this Truth of God for the establishing of the souls of his people.

We are not ignorant what an *odium* is cast upon us and the Government of Christ established in this Church, as if it were full of rigidity, tyrannically executed by us against all who dissent from us. But we have been very sparing to censure any who have made defection from the Doctrine and Government of this Church; So the world, and the confieit,

consciences of these who at any time have been censured, will bear witness for us, that these Censures have been drawn forth with all meeknesse and long-suffering, after the use of all previous means enjoyned us by Christ. And as to our principles, we professe we are very far from that rigour which some would charge upon us, as if we held that every lesser difference should bring men presently under the lash either of Civil or Ecclesiastick Censure, and that no difference of opinion can be suffered by us. We are clear that in many things of common practice in a Church, there may be an agreement by Accommodation, though difference of judgment remain about the things themselves. We acknowledge also that mens opinions do not fall under this Question, so long as they do not spread and divulge them to infect others, nor endeavour to propagate them by schismatical and scandalous wayes: We are also convinced, that all matters of difference are not of alike weight and importance, so that men must either renounce their opinions, or else incur Censure, or be denied protection: We do readily yeeld that (as we all prophesie but in part, so) men in a Church may compose debates, by putting an end to contentions, though they be not all of one judgment; and herein we judge the Apostle hath set the rule before us, *1 Cor. 11. 16.* We yeeld also, that as severest Censures and Punishments are not to be inflicted for every offence; So a great difference is to be put betwixt active Seducers, and them who in simplicity are misled. But (judging it needless, in dealing with these Petitioners, to dip any further in this busynesse) this we hold to be agreeable to the Word of God, That Christian Magistrates and Church-judicatories, ought to be so far from conniving at, or encouraging, that they ought in their respective places, and with that prudence and meeknesse that becometh, endeavour to restrain such grosse and damnable errors, as are already vented by some of these Petitioners, and may be comprehended under the general termes of their desire, and the promoters thereof; and that whether they erre in the matters of faith, or in what relateth to the standing of a visible Church, which is the pillar upon which truth hangeth, and which being overturned, exposeth the truth to hazard.

That this duty is incumbent to every Church in reference to her own members, is most clearly asserted in Scripture, where stopping the mouths of Hereticks, their rejection and excommunication are recommended by precept and example, *Tit. 1. 10, 11. and 3. 10. 1 Tim. 1. 19, 20.* We find Churches censured by Christ himself for the neglect of Discipline against false Teachers, *Rev. 2. 14, 20.* and others commended for their zeal in this particular, though found faulty in other things, *Rev. 2. 2, 4.* And seeing there are no Churches within these Nations, though of a different Constitution and Government from ours, who do not claim and exercise a power of Discipline over their own members; we see not how the like liberty can be denied to this Church over her own members, when they make defection from her. As for Civil Powers, we are sorry to find, that however the Scriptures promise them, as Nursing Fathers to the Church; Yet many now would turn them mere Spectators of the wrongs done to Christ and His Truth, so long as their civil peace is not disturbed, as if they

should be Gallin's to care for none of those things, and as if equal protection and encouragement of Error as well as Truth, were the only duty of Christian Magistrates, which Histories recorded to have been the great engine of Julian the Apostate for overthrowing the Christian Religion. A principle this is contrary to the very light of nature in the most refined Nations, none of which would admit Innovations in Religion, though some did otherwise upon politick considerations, making Religion a slave to their interests. And though they erred in the application, Yet in that and the like general principles the Lord leads them as witnesses against His people in their way of serving the true God, *Jer. 2. 10, 11.* That the Law of Moses was expressly contrary to this Toleration, is, we suppose, denied by none, and yet the most of these plea's now urged for it, taken from the fallibility of men, liberty of conscience, &c. were of as great force then as now. Nor wil they perswade conscientious men that these do not oblige us now, till they make it out that moral transgressions, (such as these are) punishable then by God's command, must have a law of immunity and encouragement now, and that what is enjoyned in the fourth Command, is not moral and perpetual, that Parents and Masters in their families, and Magistrates within the gates should see to the Sanctification of the Sabbath, and consequently to the Worship of God publickly performed on this day. And this we concive doth so much the more strongly conclude, that we find Law and Practice for this, before the judicial Laws were published; Not only Abraham commanding his children and household to keep the way of the Lord, *Gen. 18. 19.* and Jacob suppressing false worship in his family, *Gen. 35. 2, 3, 4.* But even in Job's time and Countrey, it was a received Maxime, that Idolatry (as well as Adultery) was punishable by the Magistrate, *Job 31. 9, 10, 11.* It is not to any purpose to except, that these Laws of Moses did chiefly strike (if not only) against grosse Idolatry and Blasphemies: For neither do we urge that every error should be punished, nor do we know what height of Blasphemies men may come into (as we see by too sad experience) who yet may professe all that is required by these Petitioners, in men to be encouraged. And withall, we find godly Kings of Judah have extended these Laws further than to such grosse abominations: for, godly Jeshiah did not only cut off the Priests who sacrificed to Idols on the high places, *2 King. 23. 20.* but degraded these who sacrificed there even to the Lord only, *2 King. 23. 8, 9.* as these differences of high places may be further cleared, from *2 Chron. 14. 3, 5.* with chap. 15. 17. and chap. 33. 17. As for the dayes of the Gospel, albeit Magistrates were not Christians when the New Testament was written, yet we find sufficient ground to clear us yet further, that these Laws given of old by God are still in force. For, it is fore-prophesied, that the Kings of the earth shall destroy Antichrist, *Revel. 17. 16.* And why ought they not also to suppress other errors, which are but limbs of Antichristian Doctrine, and the promoters thereof little Antichrist? *1 Job. 2. 18.* And we finde, that in times when Christian Magistrates were wanting, it did please the Lord to interpose, in a more immediate way, for punishing obstinate offenders, whether in the matter of faith or manners. We finde also that

the Magistrat's power under the New Testament ; is given him for the punishment of *evil doers*, Rom. 13. 3, 4. Now, Seduction being an *evil deed*, 2 Job. 10. 11. and the Text speaking indefinitely of all such , we would take heed of obtruding our distinctions upon it ; And that so much the rather as Christians are to pray for this benefit by Magistrates , that they may live under them not only in all *honesty* , but in all *godlinesse* also , 1 Tim. 2. 1, 2. which can never be without soundnesse in Doctrine , and purity in Worship. And whereas some except , that unbelief and covetousnesse are also evil deeds , and yet not punished by the Magistrate ; We grant , that unbelief and covetousnesse in the heart , do not fall under the cognition of the Magistrate (as neither is he to cognosce on simple opinions in the mind) Yet, unbelief professed and propagated , and covetousnesse put in practice to the prejudice of others , ought to be punished by him.

We know this truth of God is traduced as a persecuting of men for their conscience , and an encroachment upon the liberty purchased them by Christ. But as we disclaim troubling of men for the simple light of their Consciences , if it break not forth in Doctrine and Practices ; So the Scripture hath taught us , that persecution is only a putting men to suffer for *righteousnesse* , and not the restraining of abominable errors . And as we know mens consciences are not their supream rule , nor lawlesse things ; So liberty to erre and seduce , to vent lies , and fother them upon the God of truth, &c. is no part of that liberty purchased to us by the death of Christ ; But it is in effect a captivity and snare to be entangled therewith . 2 Tim. 2. 25, 26. and chap. 3. 6, 7. and to be servants to corruption under pretence of liberty , 2 Per. 2. 19. Yea , to fother this upon Christian liberty , favoureth rankly of that old way of turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness . We are not insensible , how this truth of God hath been abused and put to the rack by Antichrist and his followers to crush the professors of truth ; But we have learned , that no truth , though abused , must be cast away ; nor yet because truth is suppressed by the enemies of the Gospel , must therefore errors be spared by the friends of Christ . We acknowledge also it is a mercy , if in sad times truth get , were it but a Toleration ; Yet we cannot therefore allow , that error should have so much . Nor do we look upon it as any convincing argument , to tell us , that were our selves at the like disadvantage with our Profession , we might be as ready to plead for a Toleration as others : For , we find Christ and His Apostles , when conveened before Magistrates , never made use of that defence , That a Toleration in Religion (be what it will) was due from the Civil Magistrate , but pleaded still the truth of their Doctrine : And , though Paul was frequently under persecution ; yet we find him against Toleration , Gal. 5. 11 , with 12. Nor was Elijah the lesse zealous against false Prophets , 1 King. 18. 40. that there was a Jezebel ready to persecute himself , 1 King. 19. 2. And though we be encompassed with infirmities ; yet , in so far as we have obtained mercy , we are ready to say (as Paul did Acts 25. 11.) That if we followed any error , we refuse not to be restrained in it , and should count our selves most unhappy if we were instrumental to propagate any error , and set our selves to overturn a blessed work of Reformation in the prosecution thereof .

Having thus briefly pointed at the sinfulness of this course, We do in the fear of the Lord warn all these (especially within our charge) who have an hand in this matter, to consider from whence they have fallen and to repent; and do exhort them in the bowels of Christ, that they do examine impartially what their designs are, upon which they have engaged in this course, so destructive to their Mother-Church, and the Truths of Christ established in her; and that they forbear to prosecute the pulling down of an hedge, to let in Popery and Atheism, lest a Serpent bite them. We are not ignorant how pleasing licentious liberty is to the flesh; yet their consciences will easily tell them, that it was none of *Adam's* happiness to have more room out of *Paradise* than within it. And that it is no mercy for men to have liberty to do every one what is right in his own eyes, which hath been the plague and sad posture of the Church of God in her declining times. We do likewise exhort all the Lord's people within our bounds, as to mourn before the Lord in behalf of those who have declined, and that such abominations should find any to own them among us; So also rightly to improve such humbling dispensations; That they study sobriety of mind, the want whereof hath miscarried so many; That they receive the love of the Truth, for the neglect whereof, God is provoked to send strong delusions; That they converse more in the study of their own unholiness, and the sufficiency of Christ, which being still savoury, will keep them from gadding after novelties in Religion; That they improve Ordinances as becometh, lest rested-in formality draw on contempt of Ordinances; That they would unite among themselves in matters of inferior differences, that so they may joyntly lay forth themselves, in their stations, for obstructing the progresse of this deluge, which is ready to swallow up all Religion; And that they employ Christ much, who is the King and Head of His own Church, that by His own Spirit He would interpose to stop the current of these Delusions and Defections, that Truth, and Peace, and Holiness may yet flourish in the midst of us. Even so, Come Lord Jesus.